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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by Zonta International, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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Zonta International, an organization of executive professionals whose objectives include improving the legal, political, economic, education, health, and professional status of women, is working to end the discrimination against women that impedes their rights to human development.

Since a woman's right to development still encounters many barriers rooted in domestic law and social practices, Zonta International strongly supports the work of the CEDAW Committee in holding countries accountable for commitments made through

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ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. At its 2000 Convention, Zonta International adopted a resolution that all its clubs worldwide advocate for the adoption of CEDAW, the ratification of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW, and the removal by State parties of all reservations to CEDAW that impede the human rights of women.

Zonta International's is currently partnering with UNICEF in two projects that improve the life-long health of poor women and girls. One project focuses on eradicating female genital circumcision in Burkina Faso. Another is the inoculation of women and girls against maternal and neo-natal tetanus in Nepal.

An additional project of Zonta International with UNIFEM addresses violence against women in India, which is to a serious impediment to Indian women's full participation and involvement in economically durable, socially just and politically free development.

Zonta International is a member of Project 5-0, a network of international women's organizations that particularly focus on funding projects that increase the economic and productive capacity of poor women.

Zonta International strongly supports the need to increase the number of women in positions of political leadership to aid in the enactment of laws and that are gender-sensitive, that will the real needs of the 70% of the world's population living in extreme poverty.